

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

-- 1. (Currently Amended) A portable, protective case for storing a stringed instrument that has a neck, and a base with a sound board panel, a back panel, and lateral wall portions, comprising:

a) a housing that has multiple housing sections including at least includes a base part and a top part connected to the base part by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing;

b) the base part having a void space an area to store a that is receptive of the stringed instrument to be stored, said area having soft means for supporting all or parts of the lateral exterior surface of the back of said stringed instrument, said soft means elevating said instrument in said case, and protecting the housing having first and second support surfaces; and

c) the void space being positioned to provide a space that protects the central portion of at least one of the back panels of said instrument from contact with the interior of said case.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) The protective case as in claim 1, having wherein at least one of said interior surfaces is padded means as in claim 3.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Canceled).

7. (Canceled).

8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) A portable case for housing and protecting storing a stringed wooden instrument that has a body with sound board and, a back panels, neck, strings, a bridge and an angulated lateral portion that connects peripheral portions of the sound board panel and the back panel, comprising:

a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell and an upper cover shell half, each of the shells having a hard inner surface the shells being movable to one another between open and closed positions;

- b) a closure plurality of links for holding the shells together in a closed position;
- c) ~~a protective liner that lines~~ each of the shells having a protective liner;
- d) the liners including a first liner that includes a first layer of material in the base shell that engages only the peripheral portion of the instrument back panel ~~peripheral portion~~ and spaces the center portion of the instrument back panel away from the ~~inner surface of the~~ base shell and a second layer of material in the base shell that engages the ~~cradles the periphery of the stringed instrument at its angulated lateral portion of the instrument~~;
- e) the liners including a third layer of material that is contained in the cover shell that engages only the peripheral portion of the sound board ~~peripheral portion~~ when in the closed position; and

f) the base shell having a recess that is shaped to receive the neck.

10. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ wherein the base part and top part are connected together with a links include at least one hinge.

11. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ wherein the base part and top part are connected together with a links include at least one closure clasp.

12. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ wherein the shells are of a material selected from the group that comprises wood, metal and plastic.

13. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ wherein third layer of material cradles at least a part ~~the sound board in the closed position and a portion of the angulated lateral portion of the instrument~~.

14. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ further comprising a plurality of clamps that hold the instrument body ~~back~~ into contact with the first layer of material.

15. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ further comprising at least one rack for supporting a stringed instrument bow.

16. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 9 ~~+~~ wherein the third layer of material has a void space that is sized and shaped to receive the strings and bridge of the stringed instrument.

17. (Currently Amended) A case for housing and protecting a stringed wooden instrument that has a sound board; a and back panels with respective peripheral portions, neck, strings, a bridge

and an angulated lateral portion that connects the respective peripheral portions of the sound board and ~~the back panels~~, comprising:

a) ~~a pair of shells of rigid material~~ including a lower base shell and an upper cover shell half, ~~each of the shells having a hard inner surface~~ that are movable relative to each other between open and closed positioning;

b) connections that hold ~~a plurality of links for holding~~ the shells together in a closed position;

c) ~~a protective liner that lines~~ each of the shells having a protective liner;

d) the liners including a first liner that includes a first section of material in the base shell that engages only the instrument back panel peripheral portion in the closed position and ~~spaces the instrument back away from the inner surface of the base shell~~ and a second section of material in the base shell that engages at least a part of the ~~is positioned next to the periphery of the stringed instrument at its angulated lateral portion of the instrument in the closed position;~~

e) the liners including a third section of material that is contained in the cover shell that engages only the sound board panel peripheral portion in the closed position; and

f) at least one of the shell liners having a first recess that is shaped to provide a void space that receives the neck and a second recess that is shaped to provide a void space that communicates with the instrument back over a large portion of its area that is spaced from the peripheral portion so that the first liner contacts only the peripheral portion of the instrument back.

18. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 wherein the closure links includes at least one hinge.

19. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 wherein the closure links includes at least one closure clasp.

20. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 wherein the shells are of a material selected from the group that comprises wood, metal and plastic.

21. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 wherein third layer of material engages ~~engages~~ only the a peripheral portion of the sound board in the closed position and at least a portion of the angulated lateral portion.

22. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 further comprising

a plurality of clamps that hold the instrument back into contact with at least a part of the first layer of material.

23. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 further comprising at least one rack for supporting a stringed instrument bow.

24. (Currently Amended) The stringed instrument case of claim 179 wherein the third layer of material has a void space that is sized and shaped to receive the bridge of the stringed instrument so that no substantial load is transferred between a liner and the bridge.

25. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument having a body and a neck, said protective case comprising:

a) a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overlay a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

b) said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of said housing;

c) said base part having a first area configured to store the body of a stringed instrument, and a connected second area configured to store the neck of a stringed instrument;

d) said first area having a base and a lateral wall;

e) said base of said first area having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

f) said peripheral portion of said base of said first area of said base part having soft means; and

g) said soft means being configured to elevate said body of said stringed instrument within said protective case, whereby contact of said body of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said base of said first area of said base part is prevented.

26. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument having a body and a neck, said protective case comprising:

a) a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

b) said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of said housing;

c) said top part having a first area configured to overly the body of a stringed instrument

stored in said base part, and an adjacent second area configured to overly the neck of a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

- d) said first area of said top part having a central portion and a peripheral portion;
- e) said peripheral portion of said first area of said top part having soft means; and
- f) said soft means being configured to engage or closely overly the body of said stringed instrument stored in said base part, whereby contact of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said first area of said top part is prevented.

27. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument having a body and a neck, said protective case comprising:

- a) a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base part;
- b) said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of said housing;
- c) said base part having a first area configured to store the body of a stringed instrument, and a connected second area configured to store the neck of a stringed instrument;
- d) said first area having a base and a lateral wall;
- e) said base of said first area having a central portion and a peripheral portion;
- f) said peripheral portion of said base of said first area of said base part having a first set of soft means;
- g) said first set of soft means being configured to elevate said body of said stringed instrument within said protective case, whereby contact of said body of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said base of said first area of said base part is prevented;
- h) said top part having a third area configured to overly the body of a stringed instrument stored in said base part, and an adjacent fourth area configured to overly the neck of a stringed instrument stored in said base part;
- i) said third area of said top part having a central portion and a peripheral portion; and
- j) said peripheral portion of said third area of said top part having a second set of soft means;

k) said second set of soft means being configured to engage or closely overly the body of said stringed instrument stored in said base part, whereby contact of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said third area of said top part is prevented.

28. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument having a body and a neck, said protective case comprising:

a) a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

b) said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing;

c) said base part having a first area configured to store the body of a stringed instrument, and a connected second area configured to store the neck of a stringed instrument;

d) said first area of said base part having a base and a lateral wall;

e) said lateral wall of said first area of said base part having an upper portion and a lower portion;

f) said base of said first area of said base part having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

g) said lower portion of said first area of said lateral wall having soft means;

h) said soft means extending over all or part of said peripheral portion of said base of said first area; and

i) said soft means being configured to elevate said body of said stringed instrument within said protective case, whereby contact of said body of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said base of said first area of said base part is prevented.

29. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument comprising:

a) a housing comprised of a base part and a top part;

b) a mechanism allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

c) said base part being configured to store a stringed instrument;

d) said top part being configured to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base part, if said protective case is closed;

e) a plurality of padded means;

- f) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- g) said first end being rotatably connected to said base part;
- h) said second end being unattached to said base part; and
- i) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said base part by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over an instrument to be secured in said base part.

30. (New) A protective case for a musical instrument with a base part and a top part as in claim 25, said protective case furthermore comprising:

- a) a plurality of padded means;
- b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- c) said first end being rotatably connected to said base part;
- d) said second end being unattached to said base part; and
- e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said base part by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over an instrument to be secured in said base part.

31. (New) A protective case for a musical instrument with a base part and a top part as in claim 26, said protective case furthermore comprising:

- a) a plurality of padded means;
- b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- c) said first end being rotatably connected to said base part;
- d) said second end being unattached to said base part; and
- e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said base part by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over an instrument to be secured in said base part.

32. (New) A protective case for a musical instrument with a base part and a top part as in claim 27, said protective case furthermore comprising:

- a) a plurality of padded means;
- b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- c) said first end being rotatably connected to said base part;

- d) said second end being unattached to said base part; and
- e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said base part by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over an instrument to be secured in said base part.

33. (New) A protective case for a musical instrument with a base part and a top part as in claim 28, said protective case furthermore comprising:

- a) a plurality of padded means;
- b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- c) said first end being rotatably connected to said base part;
- d) said second end being unattached to said base part; and
- e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said base part by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over an instrument to be secured in said base part.

34. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument having a body portion and a neck portion, said case comprising:

- a) a base part and a top part connected together and together defining a housing that can be opened and closed;
- b) the base part having a first area to store the body portion of a stringed instrument, and an adjacent second area to store the neck portion of a stringed instrument;
- c) said base part having a plurality of securing means;
- d) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of said base part, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said base part; and
- e) said securing means being able to cross over said first area of said base part, and over the body portion of said instrument if said instrument is stored in said protective case, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument to said base part.

35. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument as in claim 25, said case furthermore comprising:

- a) a plurality of securing means;
- b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the base part of said

case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said base part;
and

c) said securing means being able to cross over the first area of said base part, and over the body of said stringed instrument if said instrument is stored in said protective case, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument to said base part.

36. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument as in claim 26, said case furthermore comprising:

a) a plurality of securing means;

b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the base part of said case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said base part;
and

c) said securing means being able to cross over the first area of said base part, and over the body of said stringed instrument if said instrument is stored in said protective case, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument to said base part.

37. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument as in claim 27, said case furthermore comprising:

a) a plurality of securing means;

b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the base part of said case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said base part;
and

c) said securing means being able to cross over the first area of said base part, and over the body of said stringed instrument if said instrument is stored in said protective case, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument to said base part.

38. (New) A protective case for a stringed instrument as in claim 28, said case furthermore comprising:

a) a plurality of securing means;

b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the base part of said case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said base part;
and

c) said securing means being able to cross over the first area of said base part, and over the body of said stringed instrument if said instrument is stored in said protective case, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument to said base part.

39. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a back with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;
- b) a plurality of links for holding the shells together, allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;
- c) said lower base shell half having a recess allowing for the storage of a stringed instrument;
- d) said recess having a lateral wall, and a base with a central portion and a peripheral portion;
- e) said recess being configured so that the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument will face said upper cover shell half when said housing is closed;
- f) a protective liner that lines parts or all of the peripheral portion of said base of said recess of said base shell half; and
- g) said protective liner being designed to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of said instrument back away from the central portion of said base of said recess.

40. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a back with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;
- b) a plurality of links for holding the shells together, allowing for the opening and

closing of said housing;

c) said lower base shell half having a recess allowing for the storage of a stringed instrument;

d) said recess being configured so that the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument will face said upper cover shell half when said housing is closed;

e) said upper cover shell half having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

f) said upper cover shell providing a space in its central portion that overlies the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument when said housing is closed;

h) a protective liner that lines parts or all of the peripheral portion of said upper cover shell half; and

i) said protective liner being designed to engage or closely overly all or portions of the peripheral portion of said sound board of said stringed instrument when said case is closed, thereby preventing said bridge and said central portion of said sound board from coming in contact with the central portion of said upper cover shell half when said case is closed.

41. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a back with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;

b) a plurality of links for holding the shells together, allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

c) said lower base shell half having a recess allowing for the storage of a stringed instrument;

d) said recess having a lateral wall with an upper portion and a lower portion, and a base with a central portion and a peripheral portion;

e) said recess being configured so that the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument will face said upper cover shell half when said housing is closed;

f) a protective liner that lines parts or all of the lower portion of said lateral wall of said

recess of said base shell half; and

g) said protective liner being designed to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of said instrument back away from the central portion of said base of said recess.

42. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a back with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;

b) a plurality of links for holding the shells together, allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

c) said lower base shell half having a recess allowing for the storage of a stringed instrument;

d) said recess having a lateral wall, and a base with a central portion and a peripheral portion;

e) said recess being configured so that the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument will face said upper cover shell half when said housing is closed;

f) said upper cover shell half having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

g) said upper cover shell providing a space in its central portion that overlies the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument when said housing is closed;

h) a first protective liner that lines parts or all of the peripheral portion of said base of said recess of said base shell half;

i) said first protective liner being designed to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of said instrument back away from the central portion of said base of said recess;

j) a second protective liner that lines parts or all of the peripheral portion of said upper cover shell half; and

k) said second protective liner being designed to engage or closely overlie all or portions

of the peripheral portion of said sound board of said stringed instrument when said case is closed, thereby preventing said bridge and said central portion of said sound board from coming in contact with the central portion of said upper cover shell half when said case is closed.

43. (New) A case as in claim 42, said case furthermore comprising:

a) a third protective liner that lines parts or all of the lateral wall of the recess of the base shell half; and

b) said third protective liner cradling said lateral rounded wall of an instrument if said instrument is stored in said case.

44. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed wooden instrument that has a sound board with a central and a peripheral portion, a back with a central and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back at their peripheral portions, said case comprising:

a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;

b) said base shell half and said upper cover shell half each having an interior and an exterior surface;

c) said interior surface of said base shell half being shaped to allow for the storage of a stringed instrument;

d) said interior surface of said upper cover shell half being shaped to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half;

e) a plurality of links for holding said pair of shells together and allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

f) elastic means attached to parts of the interior base surface of said base shell half; and

g) said elastic means being shaped to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of the back of said instrument away from the interior surface of said lower base shell half.

45. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed wooden instrument that has a sound board with a central and a peripheral portion, a back with a central and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back at their

peripheral portions, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;
- b) said base shell half and said upper cover shell half each having an interior and an exterior surface;
- c) said interior surface of said base shell half being shaped to allow for the storage of a stringed instrument;
- d) said interior surface of said upper cover shell half being shaped to overlie a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half;
- e) a plurality of links for holding said pair of shells together and allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;
- f) elastic means attached to parts of the interior base surface of said upper cover shell half; and
- g) said elastic means being shaped to engage or closely overlie all or portions of the peripheral portion of the sound board of a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half, thereby preventing any contact between the central portion sound board, the bridge, and the strings of said instrument with the interior surface of said lower upper cover shell half.

46. (New) case for housing and protecting a stringed wooden instrument that has a sound board with a central and a peripheral portion, a back with a central and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral rounded wall that connects the sound board and the back at their peripheral portions, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;
- b) said base shell half and said upper cover shell half each having an interior and an exterior surface;
- c) said interior surface of said base shell half being shaped to allow for the storage of a stringed instrument;
- d) said interior surface of said upper cover shell half being shaped to overlie a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half;

c) a plurality of links for holding said pair of shells together and allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

f) a first set of elastic means attached to parts of the interior base surface of said base shell half;

g) said first set of elastic means being shaped to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of the back of said instrument away from the interior surface of said lower base shell half;

h) a second set of elastic means attached to parts of the interior base surface of said upper cover shell half; and

i) said second set of elastic means being shaped to engage or closely overlie all or portions of the peripheral portion of the sound board of a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half, thereby preventing any contact between the central portion sound board, the bridge, and the strings of said instrument with the interior surface of said lower upper cover shell half.

47. (New) A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 44, comprising:

a) a plurality of padded means;

b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;

c) said first end being rotatably connected to said lower base shell half;

d) said second end being unattached to said lower base shell half; and

e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said lower base shell half by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over portions of an instrument to be secured in said lower base shell half.

48. A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 45, comprising:

a) a plurality of padded means;

b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;

c) said first end being rotatably connected to said lower base shell half;

d) said second end being unattached to said lower base shell half; and

e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said

lower base shell half by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over portions of an instrument to be secured in said lower base shell half.

49. (New) A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 46, comprising:

- a) a plurality of padded means;
- b) said padded means having a first end and a second end;
- c) said first end being rotatably connected to said lower base shell half;
- d) said second end being unattached to said lower base shell half; and
- e) said rotational connection allowing for the securing of a stringed instrument to said

lower base shell half by reversibly shifting said unattached second end of said padded means over portions of an instrument to be secured in said lower base shell half.

50. (New) A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 44, comprising:

- a) a plurality of securing means;
- b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the lower base shell half of said protective case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said lower base shell half; and
- c) said securing means being able to cross over a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument in its position.

51. (New) A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 45, comprising:

- a) a plurality of securing means;
- b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the lower base shell half of said protective case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said lower base shell half; and
- c) said securing means being able to cross over a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument in its position.

52. (New) A protective case with a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half as in claim 46, comprising:

- a) a plurality of securing means;
- b) said securing means being connected with one end to a portion of the lower base shell half of said protective case, and being reversibly connectable with their other end to a different portion of said lower base shell half; and
- c) said securing means being able to cross over a stringed instrument stored in said base shell half, thereby being able to reversibly secure said instrument in its position.

53. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a neck and an instrument body comprising a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral rim, a back with a central portion and a peripheral rim, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that includes a base part and a top part connected to the base part by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing;
- b) said base part having a first recess shaped to receive the body of a stringed instrument;
- c) said base part having a second recess shaped to receive the neck of a stringed instrument; and
- d) said first recess having soft or elastic means, said soft or elastic means supporting said instrument body at all or parts of the peripheral rim of its back, whereby said soft means elevate said instrument body within said first recess, and whereby said soft means prevent any contact between said central portion of said back and said first recess of said base part.

54. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a neck and an instrument body comprising a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral rim, a back with a central portion and a peripheral rim, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that includes a base part and a top part connected to the base part by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing;
- b) said base part being shaped to allow for the storage of a stringed instrument;
- c) said top part having a recess shaped to overly a stringed instrument stored in said base part when said housing is closed;

- e) said recess of said top part having a central and a peripheral portion; and
- f) said peripheral portion having soft or elastic means, said soft or elastic means attaching to or closely overlying said instrument body at all or parts of the peripheral rim of its sound board when said housing is closed, whereby said soft means secure said instrument body within said base part, and whereby said soft means prevent any contact between said stringed instrument and said central portion of said recess of said top part.

55. (New) A case for housing and protecting a stringed musical instrument of the kind that has a neck and an instrument body comprising a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral rim, a back with a central portion and a peripheral rim, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back, said case comprising:

- a) a housing that includes a base part and a top part connected to the base part by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing;
- b) said base part having a first recess shaped to receive the body of a stringed instrument;
- c) said base part having a second recess shaped to receive the neck of a stringed instrument;
- d) said first recess having a first set of soft or elastic means, said first set of soft or elastic means supporting said instrument body at all or parts of the peripheral rim of its back, whereby said first set of soft means elevates said instrument body within said first recess, and whereby said first set of soft or elastic means prevents any contact between said central portion of said back and said first recess of said base part.
- e) said top part having a third recess shaped to overlie a stringed instrument stored in said base part when said housing is closed;
- f) said third recess of said top part having a central and a peripheral portion; and
- g) said peripheral portion of said third recess having second set of soft or elastic means, said second set of soft or elastic means attaching to or closely overlying said instrument body at all or parts of the peripheral rim of its sound board when said housing is closed, whereby said second set of soft or elastic means of said peripheral portion of said third recess secures said instrument body within said base part, and whereby said second set of soft or elastic means prevents any contact

between said stringed instrument and said central portion of said third recess of said top part.--